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Sciatica Exercises for Seniors

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WRITTEN BY

Stretches and exercises are good ways to solve sciatic nerve pain. **Sciatica** is inflammation of a large nerve in the lower back that runs down both legs.

Sciatica is usually a common cause of buttock, leg, and foot pain experienced in seniors. The pain associated with this condition can be mild, moderate to severe, and may radiate down the back of the leg.

Adopting some **lifestyle changes** and stretching exercises can prevent symptoms from becoming chronic. Back and sciatic nerve pain can happen to anyone, but age is a risk factor and having **support services** ensures a proactive approach to health and wellness in seniors.

While medication is one way to treat sciatic pain, stretches and exercises for seniors can help alleviate pain.

SYMPTOMS AND CAUSES OF SCIATICA

The sciatic nerve runs through the low back and hip area and supplies feeling to these areas of the body. When this nerve becomes irritated, it can cause much pain and discomfort.

Often described as ‘pain in the butt,’ sciatica is the pain or discomfort running down one side of the back and into the buttock, thigh, or leg. With pain and discomfort, many people also experience some grade of numbness or a burning sensation in the leg.

It usually only affects one side of the body, with prolonged sitting aggravating symptoms. See your doctor if you experience severe sciatica symptoms such as significant leg weakness and changes in bowel or bladder function.

There are several causes of sciatica pain occurring when the sciatic nerve becomes pinched. These include:

- **Herniated disk** or breakdown of disks in the spine
- Narrowing of the spinal canal in the lower back
- Overgrowth of bone on the vertebrae
- **Muscle spasms**
- Tumor
- Diseases such as diabetes

Risk factors that make it more likely to get sciatica include:

- Age and spinal degeneration
- Obesity
- Sedentary lifestyle

STRETCHES AND EXERCISES FOR SCIATICA PAIN

There are many beneficial stretches and exercises for pain relief in seniors. As a senior, regardless of your fitness level, it's always good to perform exercises and stretches with approval from your doctor.

The following are some easy yet effective stretches and exercises that are gentle on the body.

Knee-to-chest stretch

This stretch relieves pressure on the spinal cord. It is also a very beneficial stretch for improving the flexibility of the lower back.

1. Lay on your back with one knee bent and pull it toward your chest.
2. Hold for 10 seconds.
3. Repeat with the other leg.
4. You can also do both knees together.

Calf Stretch

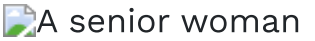
This stretch strengthens your entire leg muscles and improves mobility in the lower leg.

1. Face a wall and place hands at shoulder height on the wall.
2. Step forward with one leg and bend the knee. Continue to bend the knee until you feel a stretch in the back leg.
3. Hold for 20 seconds.
4. Repeat 3 times on each leg.

This stretch strengthens the lower abdominal muscles and stretches the low back.

1. Lie on your back, bend your knees, and keep your feet flat on the ground.
2. Pull your belly button in so your lower back is flat on the floor, contract your buttocks and lift your pelvis slightly using your core muscles.
3. Hold for 5 to 20 seconds and release.
4. Repeat 10 times.

Bridge

 A senior woman lies on a yoga mat, performing a bridge.

This stretch is similar to the pelvic tilt. Perform this on a hard surface like the floor, firm bed, or couch.

1. Lie on your back, bend the knees, and keep your feet flat.
2. Pull the belly button in, push through your heels and use your leg muscles to lift your pelvis towards the ceiling.
3. When your torso is in line with your knees, hold for 5 to 10 seconds. Slowly release and lower your back.
4. Repeat 10 to 20 times.

Swimming

Swimming and water aerobics are great exercises for seniors as they do not require too much strength and energy. It's also good for blood circulation and increases the range of motion in your legs and spine.

EFFECTIVE PAIN RELIEF

Routine stretching exercises ensure that your muscles remain flexible and free of

All American at Coram is here to support and foster your physical wellness with the help of our on-site exercise physiologist and physical therapist. **Call us** or **schedule a visit** to learn more about life in our community.

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